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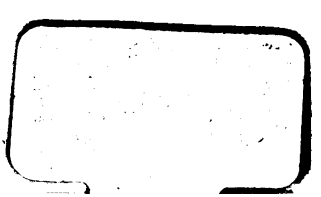
Poetry, american



NBI
Logan

VESTIGIA

VESTIGIA

COLLECTED POEMS

BY

ALGERNON SYDNEY LOGAN

AUTHOR OF "THE MIRROR OF A MIND," "SAUL," "NOT ON THE CHART," ETC.

NEW YORK

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1913

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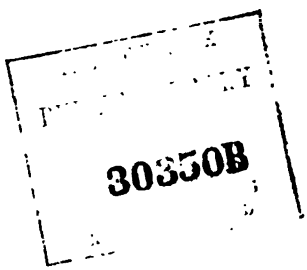

DEDICATION

THERE are times in the life of the mind when the forces which hitherto have impelled and supported us upon our way seem to waver; a sudden sense of loneliness attacks us, and the need of some strong intellectual corroboration and support becomes a great and overmastering necessity. To this rule the writer has proved no exception.

Once, when my spirit was thus fainting within me, two great Englishmen, "foster babes of fame," and one great and famous Frenchman, passing by on the other side, came over and stood sympathetically beside me. They bound up my wounds, pouring in the oil and wine of comradeship, and set my panting soul upon its feet again. There is no need that I should name them here. One of them is no more, and the other two will remember when they read these lines, and perhaps feel a passing sense of gratification that to the great and generous three this volume is dedicated.

WOR 19 FEB 36

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VESTIGIA

POEMS WRITTEN IN BOYHOOD*

*If I allow these, my earliest attempts in verse to take upon them the permanency which type confers, it is not from any sense of their merit, but because I think a man is bound to give as full an account of himself as he can, in order that students of the mind may see an even light falling upon him throughout the whole of life's journey, and not merely a flash here and there, where some attitude has been taken which vanity might suggest to be striking or advantageous.

AUTUMN (a fragment)

When the butterfly takes his last gay flight
Ere the coming on of Winter's night,
And the cricket chirps a sad farewell
To the golden Summer he loved so well;
When the freshening breezes softly sigh
As leaf by leaf drops silently,
'Tis then sad thoughts flit o'er man's mind,
Thoughts sad, yet dim and undefined
As specters on a midnight sea;

For, gazing on eternity
Man sees that the billows of life are lost,
Broken on death's dark, ice-bound coast;
Man feels that his life ere long must close
And his soul sink down to a deep repose;
Like the 'parted Summer whose playful hours,
Wearied with sport and twining flowers,
Nestling on time's protecting breast,
Sink softly down to endless rest.

LIFE (a fragment)

Is life a vapor? Is't a passing dream?
Alas! 'tis both—A vapor it would seem
Unlighted and unblessed by heavenly beam
Of sunlight;—as a horrid stifling pall
It weighs upon the soul, till a kind call
Sets the poor weary prisoner free; for all
Must meet at length with one whose cooling breath
The vapor melts,—nay, shudder not,—'tis Death.

The dream it is of a poor homeless child
Lost in the labyrinth of some vast, wild
And lonely burial place. He was beguiled
To wander ever on, and soon forgot
That he was lost, and e'en remembered not
The voiceless dwellers in that dreary spot.
Hemlock and nightshade 'midst the moldering tombs
He heedless plucked, yet felt their fatal fumes.

THE BOY'S REVOLT

I

Maxims and rules,
Ye crutches for fools,
Ye platitudes plastic,
False truths so elastic,
All hail!

II

Ye short-cuts to thought,
With quagmires fraught!
Ye patent nut-crackers,
Black reason's attackers,
So stale!

III

Supports of each bore,
Of his noddle the core,—
While he wriggles and squints,
"Toning down," "neutral tints"
Are his themes.

IV

Leaden tips of those darts
Called "fixed rules for the arts,"
Which sub-editors ragged
Shoot toward the heights jagged
Where Genius gleams.

V

Ye help manikins prate,
Calling little men great,
While at all things they rush,
Yet no subject can push
To its clue.

VI

Who can hit off no case,
Can decipher no face,
Those with empty names caught,
All who ne'er had a thought
Worship you.

VII

Sage stuffings for geese,
The rusty brain's grease,
All idiots' free passes,
Redeemers of asses,
Adieu!

FAME

I

READER, I know you long for a great name,
Listen and thou shalt have a host of samples
To show how small a price is paid for fame.
Select which e'er thou wilt of these examples;
For all have either given immortality,
Or lent to fame a more enduring quality.

II

Diogenes bought unsurpassed renown
By sitting in a tub, with many a louse
On back and head, filth serving for a gown—
You surely have a wash-tub in the house!
Herodotus by having a child named History—
Name yours the same, perchance it may do this for ye.

III

Immortal fame was Clitus' reward
For being by a drunkard stabbed to death.
This means I recommend, as far from hard,

So many sots beset one's daily path—
You only have to ask some friends to dinner;
But this plan scarce will do for a beginner.

IV

To prove how long a spark may keep in ashes
(And fame's the spark we're busy now about),
See how the name of Herostratus flashes,
With millions nobler quite by time put out.
A feat surpassed with ease by any gander
Sufficed to make a hero of Leander.

V

Lycurgus made some execrable soup,
But in this branch you'll scarcely beat your cook;
Curtius has won a place amongst the group
By jumping down a pit, without a look
Before he leaped—Plunge headlong down your well,
In it may lurk the selfsame magic spell.

VI

The great Canute gained an undying fame
By getting wet feet on the ocean's shore.
Thou, reader, doubtless oft hast done the same,
And are thou now more famous than before?
The plan I've tried, though it may end in vapor,
Has been by spoiling pens and soiling paper.

VII

Amongst the moderns, Wellington is noted
Because, when once he stood upon a hill,
A drunken, filthy, old, debauched, and bloated
Prussian dragoon did an appointment fill,
When he, with waiting, having quite given out,
Was ready to begin his homeward rout.

VIII

Reader, on thee once more my thoughts do fall—
Loose shaken by the jolting of my verse—
Renown, perchance, thou dost not seek at all,
Contented so thy lot shall grow no worse;
For, as for fame, few greatly long to gain it,
Without the means within them to obtain it.

IX

Envy the man of limited desire,
Who, piped and mugged, his day's work done, is sitting
With outstretched legs before the roaring fire,
His wife, not young, beside him calmly knitting;
Who has not always something by his side
To whisper, "I shall live when you have died."

X

A book is a *memento mori* drear,
To him who forms, a breathing thing of gloom,
A glass wherein the future doth appear,
A hand which points forever to the tomb;
These are the only ghosts men ever see,—
Their own souls thus before their time set free.

XI

In speaking to the future we become,
Even of necessity, ourselves the past,
Until identity's a name, the sum
Of life uncertainty—we doubt at last
Whether we are the form that onward strides,
Or that which midst mortality abides.

IMITATION OF DON LORENZO'S THEME AND GLOSS, IN DON QUIXOTE

THEME

"Adieu, adieu, my native shore
Fades o'er the waters blue!
The night winds sigh, the breakers roar,
And shrieks the wild sea-mew."

GLOSS

(The author of the theme is supposed to speak.)

I

My boat is dancing on the wave
Beneath my vessel's lea;
The ripples of the flood tide lave
The prow which points to sea—
Adieu, dear friends, we meet no more,
Adieu, adieu, my native shore!

II

The bar is past, all eyes are glad,
But my torn heart grows doubly sad

As cheer the reckless crew;
And as the sun-set waves we skim,
The distant shore, fast growing dim,
Fades o'er the waters blue.

III

And now the twilight thickens round,
The wave has lost its gold;
While voices from the sea resound
With memories of old:
How oft I've heard on Scotland's shore,
The night winds sigh, the breakers roar.

IV

The wind which failed with failing light,
Now rushes through the moonless night,
And bears us on anew.
The straining vessel creaks and groans,
The billows dash, the cordage moans,
And shrieks the wild sea-mew.

A DREAM

I DREAMED that I was old. My weary limbs
Tottered beneath me, yet I strove to climb
A rugged steep upon whose lofty top
There shone a marble temple white as snow.
Column on column, pile on pile was reared,
And yet its stern simplicity bestowed
A beauty mixed with awful majesty.
Methought I saw within. Around its walls
Were niches, and in all, save one, there stood
Statues of marble; but the farthest niche
Was void and empty. In the central aisle,
Suspended by a golden cord, there hung
A golden trump whose blast it seemed might shake
The firm-set mountains. As I gazed, I heard
The shadow of a voice, which seemed to say,
"Press onward"; but I answering said, "To me
Life is most valueless, the weight of years
And dull despair have crushed my youthful hopes.
I once did think that noble fane to reach,
Ambition's torch burned brightly, and could chase
The shadows from my steps; but now 'tis spent,
Mists whirl and gather, darkness round about

Envelops me—yet still I struggle on,
Helpless and hopeless, dying and alone."
Scarce had I spoken, when from out the void
Appeared a face upon whose features calm
Thought boundless, infinite, unspeakable
Was imaged. From its lips there came a voice,
Which said, "Write quickly!" I did sudden seize
A parchment scroll, and with a trembling hand
Traced hasty letters, and when now the page
Was finished, from on high there swept a voice
Sweeter than harp strings, yet more powerful
Than falling torrents, which cried out aloud,
"Bring here the trumpet, to the air I'll fling
A name ne'er known till now in earth or heaven;
For one more name is added." As I gazed,
Into the farthest niche, behold, there sprang
A marble statue bearing on its brows
A wreath of laurel—with a frenzied cry,
" 'Tis I, 'tis I!" I shrieked,—and waked from sleep.*

* How sardonically must the angel of our destiny smile when he glances over our shoulder, in the days of youth's first awakening, and reads these our boyhood's rhapsodies as we pen them. With what grim satisfaction must he place side by side the high and sunny path we have laid out for ourselves, and the storm-enveloped quagmire we are to follow.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

MY MOTHER

Obiit Nov. 14th, 1884

Oh, ye who have her with you still,
Where e'er 'mongst men ye dwell,
Oh, bend your stubborn earthly will,
That ye may tend her well!

It may seem long in months and years,
When counted as they come;
But gazing back, the mists of tears
Will bring the distance home.

Oh, let no tender impulse wait,
Waved carelessly away!
They'll faint before to-morrow's gate,
Those love-thoughts strong to-day.

Lest, when that stealthy hour has come
To beckon her away,
Ye stand aghast, despairing, dumb,
With so much left to say!

And on through brambles, thistles, weeds,
O'er memory's fields anew,
Ye fevered search for gentle deeds,
And find them still too few.

Lest in the midnight, year by year,
Ye call one gentle shade
To come and bend a shadowy ear
To speeches never made.

Lest aye in vain the heart that grieves
Would rear a phantom Past,
Where flowers supplant the dry oak leaves
Which rustle in the blast.

TO THE CLOUDS

Uncertain and deceitful clouds, which change,
Letting each willful wind remold your form!
Emblems of fickleness, the skies ye range,
Smile with the calm, and threaten with the storm;
Blush with the sunset, pale with the pale moon—
Mourners at midnight, revelers at noon!
Have ye no thread of thought which change survives,
And gives connection to your varying lives?
Ye have. Through every change, by night or day,
There lurks some hint of your o'erruling gray—
Else how could I so love you? Am not I,
Like you, a child of Nature's changing sky?
There's not an influence the world contains
But seizes on me as its proper prey,
The plaything of its pleasures and its pains;
Yet soon they lose their hold and fade away,
My heart returns to its inherent hue,
Alas, too somber! And I fear, like you,
Which on the eternal blue no foot-prints leave,
So I, when death my fabric shall unweave,
Shall leave no trace upon Thought's sky serene,
To show where an unquiet soul hath been.

EVENING VOICES

I

Evening voices—listen!
Soft and low they call,
Evening wavelets glisten,
Evening shadows fall.

II

Homeward they are calling
From our care and sin,
From our burdens galling,
From the pain within.

III

Hark, the tones are clearer!
Loved ones we have known
Drawing ever nearer
Once again our own!

IV.

Glances with the starlight mingle,
Eyes that lift our hearts on high;
Voices sound along the shingle,
Whispering love's eternity.

V.

Evening voices,—listen!
Louder now they call,
Waves no longer glisten,
Shadows faster fall.

SONG

The moon with her viewless hands,
Transparent, light and free,
Was parting a place
For her dreamy face
To gaze on the troubled sea.

There were bells in wave-washed hands,
Which tolled eternally;
There was roar on roar
Far down the shore,
And laughter out to sea.

There were four on the sands to-night,
Two shadows and two forms—
Behind and before
Flew the froth on the shore,
And foam on the land of storms.

Need shadows, or shapes more light?
O which has the firmer home?
Which stabler stuff,
The moth-like fluff,
Or the bird-like flying foam?

VESTIGIA

O heart-uniting kiss!
O bosoms beating free!
O eyelids wet
With joy! and yet—
The wild bells out to sea!

Through the languor of the kiss
Which wrapped them tenderly,
Came the steady roar
Far down the shore,
And the laughter out to sea!

AUTUMN LEAVES

The leaves lie cold
On the cumbered mold,
Their corpses lie bleached all around
Uninterred where they fall,
Till their whiter pall
By Winter is spread on the ground;

But when March, with his cloud
And his voice so loud,
As he shouts in the leafless tree,
Shall lift with his hand
Their pall from the land
The corpses shall vanished be.

A SONG OF YOUTH

Middle-Age, stand aside! on thy hopes there's a damper,
There is cold in thy eye, there's a doubt in thy pace—
Stand aside from his path, lest the course thou shouldst hamper
Of one who will die, or succeed in the race.

He comes like the wind as it sweeps o'er the reeds
Which cover the marshes so wide and so green;
He leans from his chariot and lashes his steeds,—
Streaming backward his hair and his garments are seen.

There is heaven in his eye, there's a light on his brow,
There's a curl on his lip, with the scorn of his pride;
As he cheers to his coursers his heart is aglow,
And he sees not the being who clings to his side.

Fair, fair is her face, as the pond lily's pure,
As it floats o'er its grave in the depths of the stream—
Her glance is bewildered, half timid, half sure—
She has fears for his danger and hopes for his scheme.

VESTIGIA

Swift as the dews of morning that fade in the loving
light,
Swift as the words of warning we heard on a by-gone
night,
Swift as the spray
That floats away,
Before him Fame doth fly—
Her face is a vapor cold and gray,
'Tis her back enchants his eye.

Let him on till he win her, and then he will find
She is dust on the billow and chaff on the wind—
Let him on till he win her, and then he will know
How vain the best efforts of mortals below.

Trembling age, halt away with thy cane and thy
crutch,
There's a film on thy eye, on thy cheek sits decline—
Away! in his pathway a feather is much,
And he needs all his strength, without hindrance of
thine.

MORNING

When morning is breaking,
And light winds are shaking
The tops of the alders that hang o'er the stream;

When, sluggishly drifting,
Their anchors uplifting,
Dark clouds the horizon move slowly along;
When red-tipped and glowing,
With young dew o'erflowing,
Each tree has its chorus, each branch has its song;

Then, midst this emotion,
This happy commotion,
I feel my heart still as the voice of a dream.

My yesterday's treasures,
Love's joys and love's pleasures
Ne'er bade me adieu, but crept softly away.
I've gained but a station
Of gray desolation;
To-morrow looks wan through the mists of to-day.

LINES WRITTEN ON THE MONT CENIS PASS

Oh, would I were a cloud, to float away!
To the wind's footsteps all my motions timing;
A fleecy cloud, to idly, idly stray,
And watch my shadow o'er the mountains climbing.

With hopes of kisses on each snowy peak,
I'd lure the way-worn shade my course to follow
O'er lofty summits and o'er passes bleak,
Through many a tangled brake and stony hollow.

And thus my soul, to counterpoise the time
When after love and fame in vain she panted,
Should wander endlessly from clime to clime,
Besought, in turn, for gifts for aye ungranted.

Oh, would I were a cloud, to float away!
To the wind's footsteps all my motions timing,
A fleecy cloud, to idly, idly stray,
And watch my shadow o'er the mountains climbing.

THE MOON

A VEIL of tulle the moon did wear,
As with a floating motion,
She slowly climbed her azure stair,
And gazed o'er earth and ocean.

Her veil of tulle, which fold on fold
In crumpled creases bound her,
The wind caught up, with fingers cold,
And wrapped it closer round her.

With languid, lingering, listless tread,
And air of cold abstraction,
Like one whose thoughts are with the dead,
Forever dead to action,

She slowly climbed a rugged pass
Amidst the hills enchanted,
And disappeared behind a mass
Of rocks the winds had planted.

A CHANT TO ALL POETS

I

Poets, living or to be,
Fear not when your frame you see
Yielding to the ceaseless shocks
Which impel toward the rocks,
While time's flood upon your ear
Pours a cadence sinister.
Let not death your spirits move,
So ye love, so ye love,
Thoughts below and clouds above!
So ye love that feeble spark
Which alone combats the dark
In man's bosom, and which never
Bursts to flame; but yet forever
Burns, now dim and now aglow,
As the winds of passion blow.

II

Though ye fade, your love shall be—
Gaining but a wider sweep

From its lost identity—
Part of earth and air and sea,
Of the blue immensity
That o'erhangs each mountain steep,
Of all thoughts more bold and free
That men's spirits living keep,
Lips that smile and eyes that weep,
Down through time's eternity.

TO DIOGENES IN SEARCH OF AN HONEST MAN *

Search on, search on, search ever on,
O'er mountain and o'er plain!
'Tis ages since thy quest begun,
Yet 'tis for aye in vain.

When the far-scattered, broken wave
Shall greenly rise again,
And roll from out its whited grave
Back to the open main,

Then shall the heart whose trust has been
Strewed wide along life's shore,
The light and frothy remnants glean
To give it form once more.

But gazing on the woods, the sky,
The sea, the crags, the streams,
We find at last reality
That will not mock our dreams.

* Suggested by Sharp's engraving of the painting by Salvator Rosa.

PASQUALE BRIGNOLI

(Born in Naples, Jan. 1st, 1824. Died in New York, Oct. 30, 1884.)

B ereft of voice, a culprit angel wept,
R ebuked and silent 'midst the heavenly host,
I n weary waiting; while his voice was kept
G irt round with human clay—to him quite lost—
N ot in the realm his searching pinions swept.
O n earth the voice charmed all. Then cramped and crossed,
L anguished in bonds; but as it felt them sever,
I t sang as erst in Heaven—then fled forever.

OTSEGO LAKE

Deep, deep she lies amidst the hills enchanted
Which are a spirit's home;
The undying heart to whom the boon is granted
To lead men's thoughts where his were wont to roam.
Blue are her waters—bluer than the skies—
Blue as her sister lake across the ocean;
The only other lake of earth's which lies,
Like her, enveloped in Art's deep emotion.

Girdled by mountains, winds but stoop
And dip a finger as they hasten by,
Blurring in streaks the waters. Shadows troop,
As fast as hopes, o'er the dark hill-sides green;
But not alone with verdure are they crowned—
They bear a greener memory.
And immortelles her rocky banks around,
The pallid flowers of Fame, are thickly seen,
Which, bloodless, pure, yet living, seem to say,
"We spring from that which cannot pass away!"

THE LITTLE FADED FLAG

How soft the evening tints upon the hills!
Shadings of blue, which to the mountains cling
As hearts to home. The mingled sound of rills
Blesses the silence. Half way down the steep
Stretches the village burial ground, where sleep
The memories which once were men. All ills,—
Sorrow and strife, rage, envy,—shrink away,
Deprived of sustenance, before the gray
Of these low walls. Oft passing children bring
Fresh flowers for the graves, with loving wills;
And sculptured stones have many a charge to keep.
But one there is neglected and apart—
Left he no vacancy in any heart?
No epitaph, no name, no date, no care!
The mound a heap of stones, which had been bare,
Save for some grass in matted masses green,
And golden-rod, and asters sparsely spread
In pity of its nakedness. Below,
O'ergrown with weeds, a mimic flag is seen,
Stuck in the mold.—Though bleached by many rains
And many Summer suns, it still retains

VESTIGIA

A faded hue of blood—the blood he shed—
His own and others', dashed o'er many plains—
The blood which still emits a living glow.
Forget who will, his flag forgets him never!
True to the true her motto is forever—
Still smiles immortal o'er his weed-grown grave
The little faded flag he died to save.

IN MEMORY OF THE SISTER (Real) CAT

Obiit Feb. 1st, 1897.

I

The "Real" cat was strong and sleek,
Of active paw and mind;
The "Sister" cat, by nature meek,
Was of a gentler kind.

II

Her black a rusty brown became,
Her tail was sadly bent;
But then her mind was bent the same,
Toward a high intent.

III

She vowed to toil by night and day
With one sole aim in view—
To win her master's heart to say,
"This cat is real, too."

IV

Upon his justice was her stake,
She felt it would not fail her,
If only she could humbly make
Her humble gifts avail her.

V

And so each morn she brought her mouse,
And laid it at his door,
And mewed and said, "Open the house,
Come, see, I have one more!"

VI

And oft when hastening on his way,
The stables passing by,
Her master heard her mew, and say,
With plaintive, following cry,

VII

"Wait, wait, you leave me far behind,
My legs are short, please wait;
Go slower, for I have in mind
To catch you at the gate.

VIII

"I'll help you plant the beets, or go,
And perched upon a wall,
Will watch the cattle just below,
And help you count them all."

IX

At last one day her master said
"This cat is real, too,
Her crown is won, all doubt is fled
Her heart is great and true."

X

And then that grizzly angel form,
Whose touch turns thought to clay,
Espied her on a night of storm,
And beckoned her away.

XI

Her master's heart, in turn, was true—
She keeps her place apart,—
That little shape whose short life grew
A teacher of the heart.

XII

And now, that he remains alone,
That he is "left behind,"
He knows he never spoke one tone
That she could deem unkind.

BARCAROLLE

(Music by A. S. L.)

I

Far glides our bark o'er the moonlighted surges,
Spite of the dimness 'tis hope that her urges;
Deep as she dips, she as often emerges,
Light as the froth of the restless sea.

II

Restless our hearts, though we look to the morrow,
Sighs from the past present laughter will borrow;
From the far shore comes an accent of sorrow,
Borne o'er the wake in our dusky lee.

III

CHORUS

We are rowing, aye rowing,
With melody sowing
The winds, while the billows in concert are flowing.
We are rowing, aye rowing,
With oar-tips all glowing;
But still from the shore sweeps the strain—
Sad refrain!

IV

SOLO

Hopes flit before me forever.
Vague the reward of endeavor.
Slowly from all things I sever,
Save memory's wraith alone.

V

Suns ne'er shall rise on this gloaming
Through which my spirit is roaming—
Still gleams where Time's waves are foaming
The path where thy soul hath gone!

A LETTER TO MY AUNT, MISS ANN WISTER OF VERNON

I

My dear Aunt Annie, I must write to you
To tell you what we are and are not doing.
The former's easy, for since Time first flew
From out his nest, there ne'er was place so gluing
To all the energies and efforts, too,
Of body and of mind.—This last I'm showing
By writing you a soporific letter,
Which you must read at night to sleep the better.

II

The life we lead is in the main aquatic—
Row, sail and fish, from morn till dewy eve.
These dews are things which make us all rheumatic—
'Tis a sad fact o'er which I duly grieve.
But then they soothe the nerves; for no lunatic
In this dull heavy air could wildly live—
Just one more proof of life's fixed compensation,
Where everything is dealt as a "mixed ration."

III

But I'm digressing—'tis a great relief!
Why cannot one digress a bit from living?
'Twere surely a great boon, when worn with grief,
And weary with the never-ceasing diving
In others' minds for thoughts which, to be brief,
They never had,—and with the constant giving
Of love in vain,—to close life's book, indeed,
Yet mark the place, should we wish more to read.

IV

But to return: Our life, too, is bucolic—
When the wind's East you may cut off the bu—
Then you will need a mixture alcoholic—
(I have a tipple here would please even you,—
Who are particular). It is no frolic
To feel as I have for a day or two;
But now the wind is West, and I feel stronger,
And shall stay dawdling here for some time longer.

V

I want to stay and see them cut the clover.
Its dark green stretches far as you can see;
Its bloom is ripening fast, and dots it over
With a bright pink, the Mecca of the bee.

The partridge loves its edges, near the cover—
His "Bob White" now is faintly born to me—
'Twill be a pretty sight, those fifty acres,
When covered with the hay-cocks and hay makers.

VI

Perhaps, 'tis fairer now. I love its green—
There are so many greens here! Far away
The marshes spread their light and living sheen;
The maples stretch, more somber, toward the Bay
(Whose line of blue from here is plainly seen);
Beyond the marsh, against the horizon gray,
The dark and solemn cedars massed are found
To give the landscape's thought a tinge profound.

VII

But I shall bore you with my farmer's talk.
It would be more amusing, I admit,
If here there were some maid with whom to walk,
Or row, or on the Hammock * beach to sit,
And whisper low and sigh, and on life's stalk,
Which is but barren, fasten, bit by bit,
Bright flowers—artificial, but well made—
In fact the only kind which do not fade.

* Kitt's Hammock, once called Kidd's Hummocks, from a prevailing notion that Captain William Kidd, the famous pirate, had buried treasure there. The belief still exists, having outlived the name.

VIII

Good-by, good-by, I have no more to say,
Save that I'm out of joint and cannot find
The person to reset me. Every day
The being used to rise before my mind
Ever deceived; but now I'm getting gray—
The day is o'er whose brightness made me blind—
None such I hope to meet—I've dropped the strife
of it—
Well, if I did, I'd lead them a dog's life of it.

IX

At last good-by in earnest. Think of me
As one who thinks of you, or far or near;
You are the link which binds me tenderly
To a sweet past which grows but doubly dear
As it recedes; in you I fondly see
A heart whose course my own would fondly steer.
Give love, a peck or two, to sweet Miss Fanny,
And keep a bushel, my good, kind Aunt Annie.

HEARTBEATS

(A humble imitation of the hysterico-æsthetic in verse.)

I

O DROOPING stalks of asphodel!
Thrummed by the wanton wind,
Is he then so unkind
That ye thus mourn?
Or is your sorrow born,
Like mine, of some soft wind-enchanted spell,
Some moon-flecked, night-born power
Which holds my spirit in this very hour!

II

No more I roam by cool drop-trickling grot,
Nor slippery slope, nor sun-kissed meadow wide—
They may be there, and yet I find them not,
The sweet-throated feathered denizens of wood and
mountain side.

III

I tread the mazes of the dense and prickly cover,
And find no plover
To cheer me with his pipe.
I see no snipe
Flit lightly by me through the forest shades;
And when I leave the glades,
And dreamy wander o'er the broad, smooth fell,—
Starred with the poppy and sweet asphodel,—
No woodcock springs aloft to break the spell
Of my imprisoning fancies.—Oh, I may not tell
If now I am, or was a lover!

IV

A soft cool hand,
Deep incandescent eyes,
Which are not of the land,
Nor ocean, nor sweet ever-jeweled skies—
Yet have their phantoms in each toying breeze,
In every dewy leaf—
These nurse my tender grief,
These cast a sightless band
Around my captive musings, these—
Lo, I see them there!
And yet my outstretched arms
Encircle not thy charms,
But only hold the incense-laden air.

LINES TO THE CLASS OF 1870, OF YALE, UPON THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS GRADUATION.*

INVOCATION

Spirit of Truth (my greatest merit),
Spirit of Justice (few revere it)!
Spirit of Proof (yclept proof-spirit)
Bless ye the theme I am inditing,
And guide my hand while I am writing!

Aid me ye Muses, sacred nine,
Pickle my page in Attic brine,—
Who can amuse without a Muse?
And I with "egotistic news"
And bits of truthful history,
And amorous episodes, must try
To make your moments carol by,
And make you glad you are not I.

* This poem was written in answer to a class circular containing a request, apropos of the anniversary, for material for a class history, and containing, too, the regulation amount of enforced bonhommie and ponderous jocularity.

VESTIGIA

Alas, who treads a doubtful path
Some fury licks him with her lath,
And all who seek to love or shine
Find sorrows with their joys entwine.—
Echo—Wine!

ARIA

Allegro Appassionato

I

On leaving our college,
As stuffed full of knowledge
As even our "Birdie" * can stuff out a bird,
I hastened home gladly;
My father was mad, he
Made many remarks I reluctantly heard.

II

But I had my learning,
Gained where it is burning,
And shedding forever its radiance afar—
I knew how to gamble,
I knew how to "sample,"
I knew a neat ankle, I knew a cigar.

* George Bird Grinnell, the well-known writer and ornithologist.

III

I'd bet and I'd reveled;
The edges were beveled
From off every corner my innocence had.
As sworn priest of beauty,
I had made it a duty
To kneel at all shrines, whether jocund or sad.

IV

At the high noon of night
I had basked in the light
Of dark eyes made to flicker and flash by my prayers;
Our lips closely meeting,
Our hearts closely beating,
While a bucket, our guardian, stood on the dark stairs.

V

And yet, upon leaving,
I should be deceiving
To tell you my mind could conceive nothing more;
I felt a desire
To stir up the fire
Which smouldered and smoked in my heart's inmost core.

VI

Whatever I've done, sirs,
Has not been for fun, sirs,
But breathless and dizzy upon a dark road,
I've trudged on in pain, boys,—
I fear, too, in vain, boys,—
Urged on by a spirit with fiery goad.

RECITATIVE

"What have I done," kind friends, since leaving you?
I've worked and dreamed, and thought a little, too.
I've traveled much; have gazed o'er Rome's Campagna,
And strolled through galleries where hang full many a
Such pigment form as master hands depict—
I like them, for they never contradict.
I've watched the tendency in modern art
To cater to the head, and starve the heart,
Until the voices in the "music-drama"
Reflect the man who howls the panorama.
I've seen Gambetta's structure for the free
Sink to a petty Jewish tyranny.
At home, I've seen a Congress aid each steal,
Both great and small, yet flout the public weal;

And gulp wild, wanton, infamous expense,
Yet strangle over national defence;
And stab and punish with the Pension's knife
The State for having battled for its life.
I've seen a new morality arise,
Spreading, as cirrus clouds invade the skies,
Which teaches that to steal is wholly venial,
And honesty the virtue of a menial.
I've seen a tendency in government
To gain a scope for which 'twas never meant,
And meddle everywhere, direct, administer,
With heavy hand, and mind confused and sinister—
So socialism seems "to have the call,"
That happy state where each is owned by all.
But I forget, the circular demands
Pure egotism; I yield to its commands.
I am a farmer, plethoric and staid,
Because that *pays* the best of any trade.
I have some ruddy children of the brain,
Whose advent cost me no slight throes of pain.
I have a son, besides, who plays sound cricket,
Can "hit to leg," and "cut" and guard his wicket;
And bowls a shooting ball so swift and true,
It takes your wicket, or it cripples you.
I have some acres and, besides, some aches;
A guardian angel, too, whose light forsakes
His eyes, and who with lips and breath grown cold,
Breathes in my ear that I am getting old.

VESTIGIA

FINALE

Andante

Farewell! To me your life is ever young,
I see you only as in days of yore.
From me are hid the sorrows which have clung
About your steps and entered at your door—
And you *are* young! your life is half before;
May you pass through the vista gloriously!
May you, in thoughts, live double your four score;
May all your joys come flashing wild and free,
And sorrows faint as starbeams filtered through the sea.

LINES ON THE CAMPAIGN OF 1888

The fight is o'er, the battle lost and won,
Dark clouds are lowering, and the night is near;
The army of the victors has begun
To send up cheer on cheer.

With clash of steel, in serried ranks they stand,
And proudly gaze about on every side,
O'er all the coveted and conquered land
Which they shall soon divide.

Across the vale, the beaten host retreating
Moves heavily along in disarray;
No fifes or trumpets sound, no drums are beating—
How still they steal away!

But on their broken lines and banners tattered,
As up the steep all wearily they plod,
From out a cloud, athwart their legions scattered,
There falls the smile of God.

The smile of God, prophetic of the hour
When the dark night of rapine dread shall cease,
And truth and right and justice shall have power
To lead the way to peace.

HORACE'S ODE TO POSTUMUS
Lib. II, Ode XIV.

I

Swift fall the years on us, Postumus, Postumus,
Wrinkles and age both refuse to delay;
Piety prays, but her labors are lost to us,
Fetterless death to retard for a day.

II

Not if a bull every day in the year
You should offer to Pluto, the pitiless king,
Who Geryon, Tityon, holds with a drear
And three-folded river, a watery ring.

III

We are Earth's, and whatever our gift or our mark
on it,
Still to this river necessity brings;
This stream we must meet, must approach, must
embark on it,
Dust-sprinkled rustics, or gold-spangled kings.

IV

In vain our avoidance of merciless war,
And the wide washing sweep of hoarse Adria's flow;
In vain in the Autumn we hasten afar
From the winds which bring sickness and death when
they blow.

V

We must view, yes, we must, if we will it or no,
The daughters of Danaus; and coil upon coil
Cocytus so black in its lingering flow;
And Sisyphus cursed to his limitless toil.

VI

An eternal adieu to thy house, to thy lands,
To thy spouse so adored; and of trees which thou hast
Made to flourish and grow by the work of thy hands,
The grim cypress alone shall be near thee at last.

VII

A worthier heir thy Caecuban wine
Shall waste, though 'tis kept 'neath a hundred keys;
And vintages fit for the priests when they dine
Shall stain thy mosaics, like valueless lees.

TO THE MOON

Dweller of the middle distance
'Twixt Eternity and Time,
Craving of our Earth assistance,
Though thy steps the heavens climb,

Hovering round us like the sea-bird,
While the clouds, in eddying foam,
Still beneath thee drift to leeward,
Dashing, breaking, as they roam—

Thine is not the icy gleaming
Of the pallid stars sublime,
Cold thou art, but yet thy dreaming
Feels the presence near of Time.

Near enough to see our troubles,
Far enough to have no share
In the ever breaking bubbles
Of the ocean of despair—

Earth's beneath and Heaven above thee,
Yet for neither dost thou yearn;
All of earth to make us love thee,
Naught to love us in return.

A NEW YEAR'S ODE

I

Blow out wild whistles to the sky,
Make the stars tremble with afright,
The year is dying fast to-night,
Blow, madly blow, blow him sky high!

II

Blow till ye drown those pealing bells,
They speak but of the out-worn Past,
A world which could not sell so fast
As we.—Away with useless spells!

III

Blow out the candle of Romance,
No blast the electric light need fear;
The life mechanical is here,
All else needs but a passing glance.

IV

Blow thought and feeling to the winds,
Time-wasting flutterings of the heart,
Business must guide the hand of Art,
Profit gives foot-hold firm for minds.

V

Blow in the false, blow out the true,
It will not catch the passing eye,
Blow in the "slick," blow in the sly,
Blow in the Gospel of the New.

VI

Blow in the Gospel new of Gain,
Blow out the soul's annoying light;
Blow in the great commercial night,
Vast twilight of the oppressors' reign.

TO "NO MAN'S FRIEND"

(A reach of Jones' Creek, Delaware.)

I

Who loves thee not, would call thee, "No Man's Friend,"
That contumacious and reëntrant bend
Where those who inland sail, with a fair breeze,
Swing head to wind, and lose way by degrees,
And then must "track" or tow, with shoulders sore;
And where those scudding toward the sea, before
A West wind, suddenly are ta'en aback—
All hands must go ashore, and haul in slack,
Bring the rope taut, and then, with gasping breath,
Tug on through ooze and slime the sun beneath,
Which bakes and blisters—to fling back at last
A curse upon thee, when the point being past,
The sails fill, as the prow swings toward the sea.

II

This art thou to thy namers; but to me
Thou art a faithful and a well-tried friend.
For here I watch the winds and reeds contend

In music and in dancing; while my boat,
Fast by the stem, will still obedient float
To the fixed contradictions of the tides.
I often mark the flood, how it will creep
Up through the reeds, like life, or death, or sleep,
So unperceived, so stealthy, sure and still,
So gently, calmly resolute of will,
As single-purposed as the man should be
Who would gain ground in living. Here I see
The harmless denizens of this lone spot
Disport themselves around, and fear me not,
Knowing I will not injure them,—my heart
Being of all wild, tameless life a part.
The marsh-wren sings her song of tenderness,
Sweet simple notes, which to the mind express
A thought of longing for the distant day
When man, the sad, heart-shackled wanderer, may
Enjoy a love untrammeled as her own.
The buzzard, luffing up, is past me blown,
Beating, close hauled, against the veering wind.
But better far than all, before, behind,
The marshes stretch, away, away, away!
A realm all limitless where Thought may stray,
Without one fear of meeting sights to bring
Pain to the heart, and check its journeying.
Where e'er we gaze an ever-spreading green,
The color of eternity, is seen
Sweeping afar, to meet at last the sky,—

Infinity linked with infinity!
Hail, wide expanse forever unreclaimed,
Which means unconquered, and for aye untamed,
Free from the seams and scars which leave the plough,
Wearing one aspect from the first till now,—
All hail, great marsh! for thou art of the sea,
With billows full as green and heart as free!

Thus art thou, "No Man's Friend," a quiet home
Where one love-mad, for Nature's sake, may come,
To watch the many-folded clouds, and see
The sky, their land, in its entirety;
To learn the calm that reigns above, below,
And kneel at Nature's feet, as I do now.

III

The clouds sweep onward with a steady motion,
Changing their shapes and aspects as they go,
Seeking or leaving their vast home the ocean,
Taught by its currents, children of its flow.
They have the gait of Time, now fast, now slow,
Yet smooth like his; they glide away forever,
Unchecked, unjarred, unjaded by endeavor.
That is the jar which wrecks our human frames!
That effort rhythmic, yet capricious: aims
Now near and plain, now faint and far away,

While we, with starts and stops, by night and day,
Toil on in anguish, stumbling, bounding, falling,
Sinking and clinging, staggering up and calling
On Heaven for aid—yet on, forever on!
Though our torn feet be bleeding to the bone,
Our flesh and garments tatters, and our eyes
Too blinded to discern, as we arise,
The path to follow—on, forever on!
Through piercing briar and o'er cutting stone,
Through chilling wood, o'er bare sun-blistering hill,
Through icy torrent—onward, onward still!
Dying at last unconscious if we have
Gained some slight eminence to be our grave.

IV

The foamless waves of green roll o'er the meadows,
Urged by the gusts, and whirling in their flow,
Bearing upon their swell the somber shadows
Sent from the snowy clouds,—as dark thoughts go
Forth from the minds most overcharged with light.
This home of restless winds and changing sky,
This earthly reflex of Eternity,
Which is but change, will guide the mind away
From this one spot of time where chained to-day
We pine and perish, to a pure far time
When man shall live unstained by blood and crime;
When progress steadily shall fill the sail

Which now is only flapping, and the veil
Be rent from truth, and love begin to reign,
Forging a scepter from his broken chain;
When prejudice has manumitted art,
Freeman at last, strained close to beauty's heart!

Oh, no, the love of beauty is not dead!
She sleeps—it looks like death—but have no dread,
She only sleeps.—'Tis but a little while
And she will wake, and with a beaming smile
Light all the world around her. And 'tis ours
To deck her chamber with the fairest flowers
That we can cull, and everything prepare
To greet her sight; that when, with joyful air,
She asks who planned to cheer her on the day
Of her great waking, those around may say,—
Checking all sadness as she wakes from sleep—
They rest, as thou, whilst they their watch did keep.

"NOX ERAT, ET LUNA FULGEBAT"
B. C. 218—A. D. 1800

I

The foot-hills of the Alps at eventide,
The foot-hills of the Alps, ah, long ago;
Daylight and night commingling; and beside
A permeating and ethereal flow
Of moonlight, clothing all the world below
In magic mystery. Who now could tell
Shadows from shapes? On high the eternal snow
Gleams ghostly over forest, rock and fell,
Giving to solitude its most o'erpowering spell.

II

And yet this solitude is none to-night;
Silence there is, a silence of dread sound.
Anon strange masses steal in doubtful sight;
A tramp of thousands shakes the rugged ground,
Yet muffled all as by some thought profound—
No laugh nor jest is heard, nor soldier's cry,
Even the neigh of steeds is quickly drowned—
An army toward the passes creeps on high,
Mounting with awful tread toward sleeping Italy.

III

And as they slowly climb the rocky way,
Their leader, Afric's hope, and joy and pride,
Projects his glance of penetrating ray
From a high rock the narrow path beside,
Where he hath climbed to watch the rising tide
Of Punic power that Italy shall quell;
To see no ill their struggling march betide,
And mark if orders have been mastered well,
While thoughts of pride and power within him wildly swell.

IV

But as he turns, contented, to descend,
Sudden he sees what had struck panic fear
To any heart save his; for, Heaven forefend!
Another host is seen swift gathering near,
Now dim and mingling, now distinct and clear;
Men to great engines harnessed strain and strive,
Yet stiller than his own, no whispering cheer,
Nor tramp is heard, no murmurings faint arrive,
And yet the Western steeps seem bristling, alive!

V

Has Rome then guessed the secret of his soul,
And whelmed his flank? Look how they gather there!
The moonlight glimmers treacherous o'er the whole,

For now they disappear, and now on air
They seem to tread; anon, with withering care,
He sees them plain, their lances glisten cold;
While by a strange small man, imperious, spare,
All-masterful, their movements are controlled,
Who wears a headgear odd of a three-cornered mold.

VI

A halt is called, from rank to rank it goes
In smothered tones, the order of command;
The legions stop, then wheel to meet their foes,
If such there be, who have this onset planned,
Guessing the secret of the master hand
That guides their course. Spies sent return and say
That nowhere can they find a hostile band,
All sleeps serene beneath the moon's cold sway,
No foe assails their flank, nor blocks their onward way.

VII

The ruler of that host again ascends
His vantage rock, and through the moonlight shades
Full far and near his piercing vision bends
O'er the late bristling steeps and peopled glades—
Where are the men, their steeds and flashing blades?

Of all that throng there now remains not one,
Each fancied shape a second glance evades;
Phantoms or men, the moving forms are gone;
He and his fateful band are with the Alps alone.

VIII

The glaciers gleam inscrutable on high;
The glaciers' breath, a thin and chilly breeze,
Sweeps from the upward pass, and absently
Plays through the gnarled and stunted sentried trees,
Which dare no farther mount. By slow degrees
All hearts are lightened of their passing gloom;
"Onward," the order comes, and backward frees
Each fetter'd rank. Their march they now resume,
Moving toward victory, or toward the awaiting tomb.

IX

To cheer his soldiers as the omen may,
Their chief the augur summons; and concealed
Within a rocky glen beside the way,
A fire is kindled, and the fate is sealed
Of the poor victims, that may be revealed
The meaning of the portent. Flickering high
The firelight plays o'er face and lance and shield,
And tints the augur's robe, and shrouds his eye,
While he, exalted, speaks the words of destiny.

X

"Know, leader, that the shapes which thou hast seen
Are images of things that yet shall be;
Slow-creeping centuries must intervene
Ere here shall stand another like to thee;
They presage thee a mighty victory,
And fame enduring, from that bloody strife,
So long as pride shall feed mortality
And lusts of war within man's heart be rife,
And universal death remain the law of life."

XI

And now the word of omen "Victory"
Flies through the host; once more that muffled tread,
The creak of tightening traces, and the sigh
Of climbing thousands make a murmur dread.
The rear-guard of the pass has gained the head,
Their moonlit spears sink slowly toward the plain.
The augur's fire dies down, for aye unfed;
The passes sleep beneath the moon's calm reign,
For twenty centuries unpeopled to remain.*

* Of course, it is well known that Hannibal is supposed by certain authorities to have crossed by way of the Little rather than the Great St. Bernard; but the general neighborhood is the same, and Aosta is the terminus, so to speak, of both passes.

THE BELL

Clang!—how it sweeps, so masterful and solemn!
So stern, so grimly definite in scope;
A battering ram of sound, one mighty column
To crush the walls of hope.

The human hands which cast and hung its tissue
Were but the tools of spirits, ruled in turn
By unimaginable lots which issue
From Nature's mystic urn.

Clang—once again! the interval how massive!
A silence as resistless as the tone;
Voicing the will of powers stern, impassive,
To us but vaguely known.

Clang—just one stroke! we may not choose but listen,
It holds, invades, commands, subdues the ear,
Making the heart to thrill, the eye to glisten,
With hope-bemantled fear.

And oh, the pitch! that restless fifth forever!
Could ye not, spirits, tune it to the chord?
There is an octave of the soul's endeavor,
We feel it, though unheard.

Nay, is there none, no prime to this wild partial
Which sweeps discordant o'er the wastes of time?
The bell clangs on, our lingering steps to marshal
Toward the unknown clime.

SONNETS

SONNETS

"Tristitiam et metum tradam ventis."

"Sorrow and care unto the winds I cast!"
Ay, at thy death, sad mortal, not before—
For all men their accumulated store
Of care and sorrow, when they breathe their last,
Give to the gloomy winds, grim legacy!
The winds, with steps now sluggish and now fast,
Like Christ's disciples going forth alone,
With every note of wail from sob to sigh,
From stifled moans to shrieks of agony,
Each by a different way, 'neath cloud and sun,
Go wandering o'er the world; and each doth bear
His separate load of sorrow and of care.
Their burdens sad they scatter far and near,
And sift through every cranny of the sphere.

A TIME-GLIMPSE

One ghostly spire beneath the ghostly moon,
No cloud upon the blue yet misty sky,
The monster City sunk, as in a swoon,
In utter stillness; from a casement high
I gaze and gaze, and watch the red lights die
In distant panes, as lives go out. I see
(For time seems stopped as if to take some note
Of his long voyage) from dim futurity
Back through the past; and yet my life doth float,
Like a lost sailor in an open boat,
On one small spot of time to the dark sea:
A passion-filled, swift-thrilling human frame
Hath kindled mine,—my soul doth glow the same,—
We all are falling sparks of passion's eager flame.

HOPE

THERE is a spring within our souls, whose rise
Is not in infancy, yet long before
The many tints of dawn in youth's clear skies
Begin to fade. At first 'tis nothing more
Than a green moisture, then a mimic shore
Encircles one bright bubble, which the rays
Of morning suns delight to dance upon.
And still, as creep away the long, long days,
Its crystal surface widens, and displays
Within its depths a nature of its own,—
Fairer than nature.—But a point of scum
Forms, thickens, spreads; and rising from beneath,
Grow ghastly weeds, and leprous patches come;
While fall the withered leaves, and choke it up with death.

TO MY CORPSE

Crumble, crumble, crumble, crumble buried clay;
Crumble, crumble, crumble, flesh and bones away!
Crumble gently, slowly, 'neath the morning light,
Crumble 'neath the star-beams of the blazoned night;
Crumble while the North wind cold and cloudless
blows,
Crumble 'neath the driving, piling, whirling snows;
Crumble while new ages spring to life and love,
Crumble in negation of the joys above—
But the passion born of you,
Even though unmarked, shall be
Sifted all the wide world through,
Over earth and air and sea,
Ever fresh and strong and new
In its lost identity.

THE "WINDOW" IN ORION

As through that wondrous casement in the sky
The midnight watcher with his glass can see
The awful vistas of infinity
Stretching in dread perspective, and descry
System by system backed, and sun by sun,
While firmament out-peoples firmament
With jostling, nameless stars—so all intent
Upon some present scene, and all at one
With its too human passion, suddenly
I see new firmaments of thought appear,
But oh, so far! so far they are not clear,
Yet nebulously bright. But while the eye
Struggles toward these new worlds of the soul,
The hurrying clouds of Earth before them ever roll.

THE WORLD

Art thou so small, oh world, thou canst not hold
A single grave without being overfilled?
Art thou so weak a single tomb can prove
Too great a burden? Are the tints so faint
Which give their colors to thy thoughts and thee
That this lone grave can lend thee all its hues?
Thy skies are tinted by forget-me-nots
Which cluster at its foot; and o'er the green
Of all thy waves and all thy living swards
Is spread a deepening melancholy hue
From its long ivy tendrils; and thy clouds
Are shaded to its granite's rigid gray.
Thy voices all its flood of silence drowns,
Thy thoughts its overflow of vacancy.

POEMS IN UMBER

ÉMILE ZOLA

Across the world one more *forever* booms,
The only echo from the doors of death:
Forever lost to us of sight and breath,
Forever found for those whose scattered tombs
Mark out Time's pathway. Oh, remorseless Past,
We are so poor, and thou so rich—thou hast
Them all—couldst thou no longer spare us him,
The wingless Hugo of our wingless time,
The first in clay to fashion the sublime;
The "Realist," the man whose sight, if dim
For distances, outpierced all others near,
The real heart unchilled by the world's fear;
The first to make reply to Pilate's grim
And searching question of eternal youth,
With the immortal answer, truth is truth.
Ay, truth is truth, the element which gives
Their strength to all things which 'mongst men endure;
Yet midst the tarnish of our earthly lives
It never can exist detached and pure.
It is the violet ray of the mind's light,
An inward impulse, not an outward sight.

Spirit, now but a fame, thy rays seem cold
Regarded through our tears, which cannot fall
For those whose bright forever has grown old
In luster and in aid that grief forestall.
Farewell, farewell, all hast thou now but life,
And we naught save the instinct of the strife.
The lamps of earth, alas, are faint and few,
Warmth need we here our courage to renew,
The heaven of art is high and oh, so far!
We pine to see thy lamp rekindled as a star.

DESPONDENCY

Woods of the spirit land,
Your leaflets touch and pluck me as I go,
Your branches beckoning on every hand
Wave to and fro—
Woods nipped and sere
All cold and drear,
A fading light and falling night,
Where shall I go?

Winds of the spirit waste,
The while my feet grow heavy as I tread,
Ye seem with voices, trembling with chill haste,
To call the dead.
Calling me to them, calling them to me,
And leaving us confronted as ye flee
Away, away, with distant whisperings dread.

Fallen is the night,
Perished the light,
Is there no track nor trail which leads from here?
Despair low whispers, it will ne'er appear;
For in a magic circle dost thou wander,
And aye in vain thy failing forces squander,
And though a light will shine upon thee soon,
'Twill only be the spectral, shadow-peopling moon.

A MIDNIGHT COLLOQUY

His Soul.

Oh, how the night lowers dark!
Oh, whither this down-tending way?
I dare follow no farther—oh, hark
To my prayers, tell me, where leads the way?

He.

Love me, only love me still
Keep my hand,
Nearer stand.
Over many a sunny hill,
In the happy days, hast thou
Followed as the waters flow,
Careless, trusting, without will—
Cheer me now!

His Soul.

The darkness swims round me, I fall!
'Tis my death to have trusted in vain—
How *couldst* thou? I came at thy call,
I heard thee with joy that was pain,
So potent thy speech to enthral;

'And I followed, still followed.—What! all,
All false, all thy promises sweet
Which checked my instinctive retreat?
All true, all the doubts of thy skill,
Of thy honor? I followed thee still,
Though the joys of the way did expire,
Though I saw thee abusing my will,
Leading downward through darkness and mire—
And now?

He.

And now?

Both.

Turn back, turn back, retrace our way,
Or find some path which leads to day,
To purity and peace and love,
Which shine above.
Tell us, Earth, is there no way,
However difficult, to-day?
For sunken hearts which upward yearn
Is there, is there no return?

Echo.

No return.

NOVEMBER

Leafless and dry and still! How weak the shadows,
How pale the sun far down the Southern sky,
How russet are the woods, how buff the meadows—
Tints everywhere of cold and neutral dye!

The ineffectual sunbeams feebly glancing
From trunk to trunk amidst the forest trees;
The bangles of the sycamore are dancing
To the thin, chilly breeze.

What contrast, as on high they dance fantastic,
Lightfooted, eerie, frivolous and gay,
To the reserve, reëntrant and monastic,
Which wraps this landscape gray.

I love this solitude—may none invade it—
The only love I know;
My heart is what the world has slowly made it—
A scene expecting snow.

A HYMN OF PAIN

See how the rain of human tears is falling
In blinding gusts which dim Earth's every shore,
And woe to woe and sob to sob is calling,
Unheard, unanswered in the tempest's roar.

The rain of human tears, which ever beating,
Beats down and levels, with its steady shower,
New-sodded graves, so thick their sides are meeting,
That fade from sight each day and every hour.

Yet still they rise! their grasses interweaving,
Until they form one widespread mound of pain,
The swelling sigh of Earth's torn bosom heaving,
Forever sinking but to rise again.

Oh, blessed day when all redeemed from anguish,
When, like the moon, all airless and serene,
The World, with none to die and none to languish,
Shall roll through space with pure and silver sheen.

When to her heart at last the boon is given
To pass the time to man and grief allowed,
And to resume her place, a queen in heaven,
Her glories wrapt no more in sorrow's cloud.

THE SHORELESS SEA

A SEALESS shore wakes no alarm,
Then why a shoreless sea?
From you none ever suffered harm,
Waves of Eternity.

Friends of the past, the rocks of time
Behind, beside, before,
Around me stretch, a stormy clime
Awakes the billows' roar.

But ye afar are safe, serene,
While here we toss and strain;
Ye saw the treach'rous breakers' sheen,
And sought the open main.

The moon is up, the night is near,
The ruddy sunset, dimly clear,
Still tips your distant sails.
Oh, may I, ere this faint light fails,
Lay close the course which you did steer—
Naught else on earth avails.

IN MEMORY OF JOHN WISTER, OF VERNON

Born 1804. Died Jan. 28th, 1883.

Slow came the morning, slow, with features pale,
White-robed, close-muffled in a misty veil.
She seemed to feel that Death was at her side,
And thus like him all stealthily to glide,
And emulate his footfall and his hue.
She came; but yet unmarked of one who knew
Fair Nature in her subtlest changing mood,
Beloved companion of his solitude,
Who could predict the aspects of her face,
For whom her smiles and frowns had equal grace?
She came unmarked—he slept, and slept for aye.
What lesser sleep than an eternity
Could balance that unrest beyond control,
That life-long, inner combat of a soul
Framed for the whirlwind, yet becalmed through life?
Cast in mad times of tumult and of strife,
Of popular uprising and of rage,
Strong in the storm within him, to assuage

The tempest, and to rule a surging sea
Of uncouth men had been his destiny.
His mighty strength, his ready eloquence,
His light and feathery fancy, solid sense,
His tender heart (to him was childhood dear),
His courage never tarnished by a fear,
In other times and scenes had made his name
Known of his kind, perchance of lasting fame.
But now obscure, as glad of rest, he sleeps,
And one who loved him well in silence weeps.
Up to the dizzy verge of death we climb,
And peer into the dark abysm of time
Which has engulfed this strong Reality—
Then sighing, journey on, and pondering, sigh.

THE VERNON CLOCK

Tick, tock, tick, tock, a strange and solemn sound!
Tick, tock, tick, tock, a tone akin to things beneath
the ground.
To things beneath the ground about to be,
To things beneath the ground which are no more,—
A murmur of the all-engulfing sea,
Which still grows clearer as we near the shore.

Tick, tock, tick, tock, the pendulum swings heavily
and slow,
The rustle of Time's garments, and the chime
Is but his footfall; as the quarters go,
They speak the quarters of our lives with power,
And hint of him who comes to strike the hour.
Even as a merchant counts us out our gold,
Which we are free to spend in good or ill,
So the old clock, with neutral mien and cold,
Counts us the moments we may waste at will.

Kind friends, I cannot waste them as of yore,
The flush and fire and haste have passed away.
Ye took my gladness when ye went before,—

30350B

VESTIGIA

Could you not leave it for my little day?
Nor can I freely spend them all alone;
I can but sit, as nears the mid of night,
And question the old clock of hours flown,
And ask of scenes that passed beneath his sight.
Kind friends, the clock beheld you one and all—
First those of old, and then us gathered there—
Within your beautiful and stately hall,
And still ticks on, while you are less than air.
It saw the rush and revelry and glare,
And hurrying feet,
And eyes that meet,
And lips that long to kiss, half shy, half bold.
Inscrutable,
Immutable,
Slow ringing,
Still swinging,
It ticked each hush as ye lay lifeless there;
It saw us bend o'er the last forehead cold,
Then saw the walls stripped, tenantless and bare.

Tick, tock, tick, tock, a strange and solemn tone!
An echo of the voices of the blest,
A sound which bears me on to those at rest,
Who for an hour have left me here alone;
A sound both grim and grand, both stern and free,—
The whisper of the shell to time's eternal sea.

J. F. H.

Obiit 1878

"Pauline, image de ma belle vie!"
—*Balzac.*

O HEART too early waning,
Rough Grief's too tender prey!
Thy power to feel
But urged the steel
Of Pain thy peace to slay.

Yet some through life are gaining
A tolerance of woe,
The power to bear
Increase of care
With every ill doth grow;

And some, like wild dogs speeding,
Across life's broken waste,
O'er hill and dale
Have kept the trail
Which the phantom fame hath traced.

Their bleeding feet unheeding,
These blindly follow swift,
And one by one
Sink down alone
In secret glade and rift.

But what of thee, bright creature
Created but in vain,
Wert thou but made
To cast a shade
Like rocks upon a plain?

Was all that from each feature
Flashed forth, the love, the pride,
Formed for an hour,
A sport of power,
A boast and naught beside?

My eyes are ever seeing
Thy golden tresses fair,
Thy dark eyes' fire—
Love, hope, desire—
Through mists of chill despair.

O, mystery of being,
That meeting which decreed
That one in pain
Should turn again,
And one in pain proceed.

THE SOUL'S BANQUET

Oh yes, it was a lovely night—
The moon was at the full, and near
The summit of her steady flight;
My heart was young, my heart was light,
My heart was pure and clear.
My feast was ready, and I called them all,
From east and west, to come and share with me.
I deemed it good and beautiful; my call
I thought would bring a surging sea
Of guests to jostle and to feast.
My summons ceased.
The silence had increased.
No, not one footfall could I hear
To prove my voice had reached one living thing.
The silence round me changed from grand to drear,
From drear it grew to menacing.

But I was young, and so with hope imbued,
With all my skill I still my feast renewed,
And still I called; but still they did not come.
Perchance I thought I called, and was but dumb.
Days came and went, yet all the same:
The board stood loaded, all alone,
The flowers bloomed, the crystals shone—
No merry-makers came.

At last, upon the horizon's rim
I saw a speck, 'twas faint and dim;
But nearing fast, it grew and grew
Until a living shape I knew.
Then others joined, in threes and fours—
They came, a group, a squad, a crowd,
Toward the board a column pours—
They are my guests at last arriving.
They are my guests, but all in black,
And wrangling, too, with voices loud.
They wait no signal of attack,
At everything, each, all are driving.
They have the flowers quite destroyed,
The viands they have all devoured,
The vases broken, and have showered
The wines upon the sward. Uncloyed,
Unsated, on a sudden they arise,
And hasten from their havoc with hoarse, rasping cries.

Fools only deem their case is rare,
That theirs are consecrated woes;
And yet it makes the form more spare,
The while the eye more furtive grows,
To think that what we did prepare,
And spread with so much pride and care,
Was only food for crows.

ACQUIESCENCE

Oh, what the Power with life inwove
Which makes us but to mar?
Which plants and tends and garners love
To scatter it afar.

Which makes the tendrils of the heart
To man and beast and tree
Cling as if never more to part,
Only to tear them free.

Which casts the joy-bell of the mind,
But tunes it to a knell;
And makes *forever* ever find
Its echo in *farewell.*

"Forever *there,*" a poet sings—
But where? Through depths profound,
From cliff to cliff the echo rings,
A cold abysmal sound.

Whoever has the close-tuned ear
To catch the undertone,
In every song a dirge can hear,
In every laugh a groan.

'Tis man who has his world outgrown,
His hopes, thoughts, wishes fly
Beyond his atmospheric zone,
To tumble from the sky;

To fall to Earth, who gathers all,
And, on her endless way,
Smiles gently o'er the throes that gall
Her animated clay.

THE FARTHER SHORE

Away, away, my gaze is far away,
Through many a cold and perished night and day,
Which float transparent, like the layers that lie
Upon the confines of an Autumn sky,
In dim aerial distances. I gaze
Backward, still backward through the farthest haze,
And our dim tracks across the world I see
Since first we journeyed on in company.
My eye can follow on o'er crag and glen,
O'er prairies and through forest, copse and fen,
Beginning where my footprints first are shown
Small, slipping, faintly pressed beside thine own,
Then on to where they grow more firm than thine,
On to a strand where now are only mine—
That surfless coast bereft of ocean's roar,
Where the wind ever blows from off the shore.
Where, at the utmost limit of the way
Which we might tread together, in the gray
And spectral light of an Autumnal morn,
I stood and saw thee o'er the waters borne
Far from the world I know of joy and pain,
Beyond my utmost vision's utmost strain.

VESTIGIA

I live upon the sands of that grim sea,
And by the ripple of Eternity
My ears are ever filled; and fast or slow,
I pace the shore forever to and fro,
Walking through ghosts which need not step aside
To give me way. Beside the somber tide
'Tis thus my fate to wander, and to peer,
Through the transparent figures clustered near,
Far o'er the distant reaches of the sea;
Watching, with an unbidden constancy,
That outline dim which drifts the winds before,
That land-like cloud they call the farther shore.

LINES IN MY MOTHER'S MEMORY

I

Mother, no Spring was e'er so beautiful,
So vainly beautiful, so over-fair,
With joy so radiant and of health so full
As this, for me the first thou canst not share.
All Winter long I roamed each corridor,
The empty hall, the desolate chambers wide
(Except one room, untrod forevermore),
And saw with furtive half-averted looks,
The paintings, tapestries, plates, carvings, books,
All blank, expectant, idle, misapplied —
Absent they echoed back, and naught beside,
Yet absent only from one little place.
Now Spring has called me forth to gaze in space,
In act or thought to roam o'er earth and sea,
And view each scene where thou hast been, couldst be—
Wide as the prospect, still thou wert not there—
I 'gin to feel thou art not anywhere.

II

The flowers thou hast planted long delayed
Their coming, as in doubt and half dismayed,
Fearing to find thee not; and now they stand
And only seem a lesson to repeat,
And wave unmeaningly,
Wanting thy tender hand,
Lost in the land,
As lost as I.
In vain they strive my lostness to beguile—
Yes, with a sweet, but oh, so vacant smile!

III

I dread the porch, the altered scene
Of many a pleasant evening talk.
In every winding garden-walk,—
Where all thy mite of joy hath been,—
I seem to hear thy feeble feet.
At every turn I look to meet
That stately form, half stooping now,
Yet nobly bent, as grief but bends,
Chastened and dignified by woe,
With that sad grace of vanquished pride
Which sorrow gives to make amends
For having taken all beside.

IV

Ere driven by unrest's necessity,
I painfully displace and scatter far
The things which thou didst prize, or ere again,
Pursuing still my ever-clouded star,
I troubled sail the troubled sea,
Instinctive still, I look farewell
Where most thy absence now doth dwell,
That echo of thy presence vain.
The favorite seat deserted now;
The vacant pane where, from below,
I met thy sad, fond welcome here;
The expected step ne'er heard to fall,
Yet ever sounding in the ear;
The labeled work, the folded shawl,
The cherished book whose corners curled
Are dim with dust; the garnished bed
Which desolate yawns untenanted;
The empty room, the house, the world,
Reëcho, *lost forevermore!*
I give one last, long, wistful gaze
Of restless sorrow and amaze,
And all unhomed, push off from shore.

V

Sea, sea and sky, and many a wind!
We long have left the shore,—

The horizon closing in behind,
And gliding on before.
Lovers of shallows, waters emerald green,
How swift ye fade! an ever deepening blue,
Supplanting you, on every side is seen,—
Seas wilder, freer, native waves, than you.

For other minds they bear a mystic charm,
These wild waves which the wild winds urge,
Hearts bound with joy, half mingled with alarm,
Catching the freedom of the surge.
To me they paint the troubled soul,
As types, and naught beside,
Emblems of an immense regret
As desolate. deep and wide.

Swell onward, billows, foam and fret,
Though fast and far ye roll,
My sorrow's sight beyond you yet
Can pierce without control.
Beyond your farthest Western line,
Where shifting clouds and foam combine
I ever see one sacred spot
Upon a hillside lone,
Where blooms and fades forget-me-not
Beside an ivied stone.

VI

It is not mist which fills the Rhone's wide vale,
But air made visible; a purple hue,
Living and flushed, hangs o'er each pointed sail
That dreams o'er Leman's waters; tiers of blue
Rise, ever fainter tinted, toward the sky—
Pierced by the sun with planes of mystery—
To merge beneath the highest mountain peaks
In a thin pearl, through which in serried streaks
The glaciers shine—a chilly light and stern,
Born to repel, yet cause the heart to yearn,—
Serene, reserved, contained, yet strangely clear,—
A light as of some dawn, but not of this, our Sphere.

The Dent du Midi's seven castled peaks,
From their aërial sea,
Rear high in space their wind-cut, snowy towers,
And lift my heart aloft to Heaven and *thee*.

My thoughts go backward to that awful morning,
Nor night nor dawn, when by some freak of Time,
I stood with thee upon a wilder summit,
A pass e'en more sublime.

To when, with ice and snow above, around mē,—
The mind's eternal snow,—
I stood upon that cloud-enveloped frontier
Which lies betwixt the lands of peace and woe.

I felt a deadly numbness creeping o'er me,
Heard the faint words, "Forget me not, my son,"
Then rallying quick, I bid thee be of courage—
And found myself alone.

Slow I descended, slow, with backward glances
And many sighs and tears,
Leaving that valley which for me forever
Henceforth had fewer fears.

From out the shadows circling close around me
Upon my heart there fell
A shade no joy of life shall wholly scatter,—
Not even music's spell;

To stay till merged in universal shadow,
It shall with night entwine,
When next I stand upon that icy summit,
Prepared to pass the line.

VII

Farewell, pure heart, that through life's darksome region,
Where noxious vapors eddy through the night,
And staining shadows menace by the legion,
Passed with unaltered light.

Red is my torch,—its flickering earthly glimmer,
Flaring and falling, through the mirk is shown;
Yet if at times there gleams a purer shimmer,
That ray is all thine own.

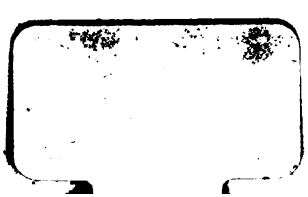
VIII

Forgive me if without thy smile,
With none to know or care,
I struggle here a little while—
Not born to feed despair.

It is thy spirit keeps me still
In the world's lists, thy dauntless will
(Oh, would that more of thee were mine!)
Which could not flinch, and would not pine.

Blown, jostled, stricken, bowed with pain,
Borne backward in the contest vain,
Stubborn I strive, and wait the day
When I, at last, may sigh and say,
"The fight is ended, lost or won—
I did not yield, and yet 'tis done."

IX

Farewell, farewell, I cannot hope
To reach thy soul's far higher scope,
Yet in my life, while lingering here,

May still some trace of thee appear.
Oh, may I more deserve thy pride,
Oh, may that power to curb and guide,
Oft foiled by my wild, wayward will,
Forever more with me abide,
And check my passions' surging tide—
Now that thy voice, heard but by me,
Amidst the mountains, by the sea—
Ne'er silent when I am alone—
Has gained that awesome, tender tone
Of realms so calm and still.